

VFC

Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program - California

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program is a federally-funded, state-operated vaccine supply program. This national program is intended to help raise childhood immunization levels, especially among infants and young children throughout the U.S. Approximately 60 percent of California's children may be expected to benefit from the VFC Program.

The VFC Program means that participating physicians no longer need to refer many children in their care to public providers for immunizations if parents cannot afford the out-of-pocket cost for vaccines.

Since its start in 1995, California's VFC Program has annually supplied vaccine, at no cost, to participating public and private sector providers. In 2001, the VFC Program in California distributed more than \$123 million of federally-purchased vaccine to more than 3,500 public and private provider sites throughout the State. California's customer satisfaction surveys have consistently shown most providers to be very satisfied with the VFC Program.

Children Eligible for the VFC Program

The VFC Program was created to meet the vaccination needs of children from birth through 18 years of age.

Children eligible to receive VFC-provided vaccine include the following:

1. Children eligible for Medicaid (Medi-Cal and Child and Disability Prevention [CHDP] Program eligible in California);
2. Children who do not have health insurance; and
3. Children who are American Indian or Alaskan Native.

In addition, children who have health insurance that does not cover vaccines may receive VFC-provided vaccines at federally qualified health centers (community/migrant health centers) and rural health clinics.

Note: Children who have health insurance that pays for vaccines and Healthy Families Program subscribers are not eligible to receive VFC vaccines.

VFC Participation Requirements

To participate in the VFC Program, providers need to agree to:

1. Screen parents or guardians to determine children's eligibility (verification is not required);
2. Maintain records of the screening with the eligible children's record;
3. Follow the recommended immunization schedule as established by the ACIP and state law (individual medical judgement may be exercised). (The American Academy of Pediatrics schedule conforms with the ACIP recommendations.)
4. Not charge for the VFC-supplied vaccine (providers may charge an administration fee of up to \$17.55 per dose administered if they do not deny immunization because patients cannot pay the fee); and
5. Provide vaccine information materials as prescribed by law (required of all providers despite their enrollment status in the VFC Program).

VFC providers are not required to:

1. Accept children merely because the children are eligible for immunization through the VFC Program.
2. Become Medi-Cal or CHDP providers.

Enrollment in the VFC Program

To enroll in the VFC Program, a health care provider agrees to follow specific state requirements detailed in the “Provider Enrollment Form”. This one-page signed agreement is kept on file at the VFC Program.

At the time of enrollment and annually thereafter, the provider also must submit to the VFC Program the one-page “Provider Profile” and “Provider Profile Form – Supplemental” forms. The Profile form furnishes the VFC Program with information on where the provider wants to receive the vaccine and the provider’s estimates of the number of VFC-eligibles the site will serve. The Supplemental form furnishes the VFC Program with the number of persons with prescription-writing privileges who will use VFC vaccine.

The VFC Program retains the Profile and Supplemental forms and uses them to learn the overall number of patients expected to be seen for immunization services and the percentage of patients in the providers’ practices that may be eligible for immunization through the VFC Program.

In addition, providers who wish to order varicella vaccine must submit the one-page, “Certification of Capacity to Store Varivax[®] Vaccine” form to document that they can comply with the storage and handling requirements of the vaccine.

Vaccine Ordering and Supply

Private providers who enroll in the VFC Program may order vaccine approximately every two months (approximately six times per year).

The VFC Program will have the vaccine delivered, at no cost, directly to the provider to administer to eligible children. The VFC Program will provide a ready inventory of federally-purchased vaccine to the private provider and will eliminate some up-front costs in providing vaccine to eligible children.

The system that health care providers use to purchase vaccine for their private-pay patients will remain unchanged.

Currently, the vaccines and combination vaccines offered by the VFC Program are those providing protection against 12 diseases.

- diphtheria
- *Haemophilyus influenzae* type b
- hepatitis A
- hepatitis B
- measles
- mumps
- pertussis
- pneumococcal
- poliomyelitis
- rubella
- tetanus
- varicella

New vaccines (including new combination vaccines) such as varicella, preservative free hepatitis B, and pneumococcal conjugate are supplied to providers through the VFC Program. The VFC Program will supply other new vaccines when they are approved by the FDA and recommended by the ACIP.

The national goal to vaccinate 90 percent of 2-year-old children depends on the support of private health care providers. The Vaccines for Children Program contributes to this goal by removing vaccine cost as a barrier to vaccinating eligible children in the care of private health care providers.

Additional information is available by calling or faxing the VFC Program at (510) 704-3750 or (510) 843-0242, respectively.